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# next door

by David Megarrity

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its arts funding and advisory body.

## Writer's Note

*Next Door* portrays the same half-hour in the lives of two neighbours, experienced from both sides of the wall that divides them. It's a story about perception, reality and prejudice.

It's a humorous examination of how humanity's greatest strength – imagination, can be used to distort perception and alienate the 'other'.

*"Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed"* UNESCO Constitution 1946 [Archibald MacLeish]

## Form

NEXT DOOR uses music, sound, performance, design and drawing to explore how different two neighbours imagine themselves to be.

NEXT DOOR is principally non-verbal and [almost] totally fourth wall.

The symbiotic nature of narrative, action and music strongly implies the need for a choreographic approach as part of the dramatic form.

There is no real comedy without integrity. The performance approach is a gentle, realistic clowning style strongly grounded in the situation.

## Character

COWBOY A is the world's angriest cowboy, ready for action.

COWBOY B is a happy go lucky cowpoke, ready to play

They are played by the same actor.

## Crew

A male STAGE MANAGER/PUPPETEER will be required to manipulate set/props and create certain live sound cues.

## Set

Two very similar rooms need to be portrayed. One for each cowboy/half of the play.

Dingy studies in brown, they are mirror images of each other.

The set operates like a book, with a 'page' turning at half-time to reveal the new room: the 'other side of the wall'. Holes are punctured in the wall at certain points in the show.

Subtle differences between the rooms include altered shades, patterns, brand of radio, and oppositions such as the bust of a horse's head on one side of the wall; which on the obverse, is the back end of the same horse.

There is a single window, side stage. A radio sits on a shelf. An easel DSL.

Key props hang on the wall. A framed picture of a horse, a skillet, a coiled lasso, a horseshoe.

The cowboy sleeps upright. Like horses do. In a vertical bed. Pillow attached to the wall, a blanket hung to complete the illusion.

## Music and Sound

Are integral to NEXT DOOR. Songs have been selected and noted in the text.

The continuous soundtrack needs to be played twice, once for each half. The second half is strategically edited so it's ½ to 2/3 the length of the first half.

Sound effects and ambience are either edited in to the soundtrack or produced live.

## SCENE 1B

*Music: Short Trip Home [Meyer]*

*From the album An Appalachian Anthology Sony Classical SK89683*

The sun rises. A bird sings. Gentle bucolic music.  
A bare room. A while ago. Perhaps it is a motel.  
A picture of a horse on the wall. Like a shrine. A plaster bust of a horse hangs with other paraphernalia on the wall.

COWBOY B sleeps. Standing up. His bed is perpendicular to the floor.  
Only his hat is visible over the sheets and pillow. He tuns contentedly in his sleep, dreaming sweet dreams of the prairie.

His cowboy outfit hangs from his bedside shelf. On it a wireless sits, dormant.

The unseen bird releases a joyful trill, and he lowers the sheet to reveal a sunny complexion. 'Sitting up' in bed, he turns to the window, smiles, and gets up. He is a happy COWBOY, wearing long johns.

He sleeps with his teddy, which has not yet woken.  
COWBOY B gently tucks him back in bed.

He goes to the easel, picks up a crayon, and looks at the framed picture of his horse. He then draws a tiny semicircle in the corner of the paper on the easel. He seems happy with it, and puts the crayon down.

COWBOY B exercises, his movements a peculiar mix of calisthenics and cowboy gestures. He practices lassoing, mounting and riding his horse, and a very unthreatening 'quick draw' of a non-existent gun.

He moves to the window and listens to the bird sing. The bird is his friend. He engages it in conversation, whistling answers to tweeted questions. The exchanges continue until a violent thud silences the birdsong.

A collection of white feathers billows in from the window.  
They float sadly to the ground.

COWBOY B moves to the window and sees nothing, then picks up a feather from the floor. Something has happened to the bird. But what?  
COWBOY B might be as happy as Larry, but he's as dumb as a box full of hammers.

He moves to centrestage, pondering a single white feather between his thumb and forefinger. He again turns his gaze to the wall behind him. Next Door.

He tries repeatedly to place the feather in his pocket, but realises he doesn't have a pocket because he has no clothes on.

The music ends. The sound of radio static comes from Next Door.  
He listens to the wall, shifting a skillet to one side to hear.

## SCENE 2B

Music: *Hello Walls* (Nelson) **Willie Nelson** 1973 [Liberty Records]

Music comes from Next Door. He looks at the wall behind him.  
It's not a bad tune. He bounces slightly to the beat.

COWBOY B moves to his outfit. Draped over the coathanger, with his boots below, it looks like a small cowpoke.

He plays with manipulating the clothes into macho positions, then mirroring the pose. He asks his clothes to dance. They accept, and he waltzes round his tiny room, 'charmed' by his new companion. He 'dips' her a few times; but she falls to the ground, and becomes clothes again.

He puts on the clothes. Gradually this act, too becomes a bootscootin' kind of dance.

Dressed and suddenly hungry, he unwraps a piece of cheese, finds it is mouldy, and puts it on the floor near the mouse hole. He waits for the mouse to eat the cheese, then realises the mouse may require privacy for his meal. He turns away. At that instant, the cheese disappears.

COWBOY B returns to the hole to find the cheese gone. Dang that crafty little mouse.

He goes to his easel, and again, makes a seemingly random mark on it.  
We can see what he has drawn. It makes no sense.

Spying his trusty lasso hanging on the wall, he grabs it and makes a show of spinning the rope stylishly in mid air. Then it tangles, binding both his arms. He extricates himself. This always happens.  
The lasso, however, makes a good skipping rope.

He twirls the rope and skips, jumping on the wooden floor.  
An ominous 'thud' comes from Next Door. He stops skipping and looks at the wall.

He resumes skipping, and again is stopped by a thud so hard it rattles the pictures on the wall.

He tries once more, but again, Next Door's 'thud' stops his fun.  
He rushes to the wall, chastened, and hangs up his lasso tamely.

He moves to centrestage, and stands stock still, eyes alive, 'being good'.  
A floorboard squeaks beneath him. He stands even stiller.  
A 'click' emanates from the wall behind him. The music stops.  
His eyes move about, trying to catch a glimpse of his invisible adversary.  
Next Door.

### SCENE 3B

Music : **Wayfaring Stranger** Cullen Gaylean And The Virginia Mountain Boys  
From *Classic Bluegrass* (Smithsonian Folkways)

The moment of tension passes.  
COWBOY B looks down at his feet.  
He has forgotten to put his boots on.

He goes to where his boots sit, and grabs a sock. It's inside out.  
He reaches into the sock to correct this situation, but discovers he has  
created a puppet.

He turns on the radio, hand still in sock. Its dial lights up, but only static is  
heard. He now has socks on both hands. Holes in the socks look like eyes.  
He grabs the coathanger, sticks it in the top of the wireless as an improvised  
aerial and music starts.  
A man sings a cappella.

COWBOY B tunes into the music, and the sock on his left hand starts  
singing, lip-synching to the music. Another voice enters, singing in harmony.  
Now both his socks are singing. He is playing. It is fun.  
The song ends in static, the light flickering on the radio.

He removes one sock and fiddles with the dial. He removes the other and  
fiddles with the aerial. A man's voice drawls from the radio.

COWBOY B listens. He is still barefoot.  
He makes more seemingly random marks on his easel.  
Two long, intersecting curves.

A ripping, crumpling sound comes from Next Door.

## SCENE 4B

Music: **Little Birdie** The Stanley Brothers from the album *Classic Bluegrass* (Smithsonian Folkways)

From the radio, an announcer speaks from a live broadcast.  
It's very interesting. COWBOY B applauds along with the radioland audience.

The socks impede his clapping, so he removes them, dropping them on the floor. He remains barefoot.

He draws a little circle on his easel.

The song starts. It's frantic, energetic, joyful music. COWBOY B starts to tap his toes. The dance is infectious, and moves up his body, as he bootscoots around the room.

Then an idea strikes him. He reaches under the bed, and pulls out a box. In it is another box. He unwraps what's inside. A jaw harp.  
He sproings and twangs along with the radio. He at first assumes a serious classical pose, but then the rhythm gets the better of him and he moves through a range of 'rock and roll' jaw harp poses. He stomps too.

There is a bang on the wall. COWBOY B straightens up with a start.  
The picture of his horse falls from the wall.

He looks at his hands. They are empty. Where is the jaw harp?

His throat is sore. He feels it. An object moves down his gullet.  
He has swallowed the jaw harp.  
Concentrating, he follows its journey to the pit of his stomach.

It lands there with a muffled 'twang'.

The music stops, replaced by gentle static.

COWBOY B pokes his stomach. It twangs.

## SCENE 5B

*Music: Bach Prelude From Cello Solo from the Bela Fleck album Perpetual Motion*

COWBOY reluctantly turns down his radio. He re-tunes.  
The light on the dial flickers.

Suddenly a classical tune played on a banjo burbles from its speaker.  
He fiddles with the volume so it's as quiet as can be.

He sticks his chin out, petulantly defying his troublesome neighbour behind the wall. He creeps downstage, every creak and squeak making a seemingly big noise. A particular floorboard is very squeaky.

He likes the music. It's a bit sad. He sits on the floor, deflated.  
It seems Next Door won't let him do anything fun.

COWBOY looks at the fallen horse picture, and moves to it. It is broken.  
He tries to hang it up again. Its picture falls out, leaving only the frame.  
He's sad about that. He props the picture up on his shelf. As he looks at it, he is transported.

He imagines himself back on the happy trail, his trusty horse beneath him.  
The reverie ends. He gets a little teary and his nose gets runny.

He notices a red neckerchief on the floor near the mouse hole. He plucks it up, examines it, blows his nose on it, and then puts it back on the floor.

He turns away from it and it disappears back through the hole.  
Turning back, he sees that it is gone. Perhaps he imagined it.

He picks up the crayon and makes a final mark. A little squiggle.  
The drawing still doesn't make sense.  
He detaches it from the easel, turns it upside down and puts it back on.  
The previously random lines coalesce into a line-drawn image.  
It is a sunny landscape with sun, birds, a long road leading up into the hills, with a horse and rider at the foot of it

Looking sadly at the drawing he has created, he switches the radio off.  
The light on the dial goes out.  
Goodbye, old pal.



## SCENE 6B

**Music:** *Carmina Burana Fantasy* Sandy Bull (Based On Carl Orff's Work, Arrangement By Sandy Bull) Associated Music Publishers Inc. [BMI] (P) & © 1999 Vanguard Records

The sound of static comes, loud and clear.  
COWBOY B checks his radio. It is off, the dial dark.  
The static is coming from Next Door.

A 'thud' rattles the wall, startling COWBOY B.  
He stomps his foot.  
Another 'thud' comes in reply, much harder this time.  
The picture frame again falls from the wall, smashing to pieces.

Music starts. An angry solo banjo. COWBOY B sighs impatiently.

He moves to his radio and begins to tune it, the volume very low.

He puts his ear to the wireless, then pulls it closer. He turns away, and the radio moves back to where it was. This happens a few more times.  
It becomes a tug of war.

The peg on the wall which holds COWBOY B's rope falls out. The rope falls to the ground, and the peg leaves a hole.

COWBOY goes and investigates the hole. He detaches his coat hanger aerial, pokes it through the hole, then pulls it out, repeating the action a few times. Clearly something is happening on the other side of the wall.

Then pulls the feather from his shirt, and pokes it through the hole. A gift.  
Laughter is heard, then it is snatched away. It gives him a fright.

Then the feather shoots back through the hole.

The knotted end of a rope pushes through. He pulls it out. Slowly, marvelling at its length. It's a nice lasso. But he gives it back. He stabs it through the hole and there is a yelp of pain from the other side.  
The rope is sucked back through the wall.

Uh-oh. He moves downstage and hides behind his easel.

A wad of paper appears in the hole blocking it.

## SCENE 7B

Music: *A Gringo Like Me* (Tevis/Morricone)

A macho tune starts. COWBOY B goes to the wall to listen.  
The music is not to his taste.

He goes to the bed, and pulls out a box. In the box is a white bundle.  
He unwraps a harmonica from the white hanky. It glints.

He sits on the floor, leaning on the wall, and begins to play happily.  
Next Door's music invades.  
He tries to put his fingers in his ears, but realises you need your hands to play the harmonica.

Then he stops. The music coming from Next Door is terrible.  
He goes to his bed, grabs the sheet, and wraps it round his hat and head to block the sound.

He goes back to the wall, and plays the harmonica.  
A grinding sound comes from the wall. It sounds like a drill. COWBOY reels away from the wall and pulls a drill bit out of the back of his head.

He looks at his hands. The harmonica is gone. He has inhaled it.  
He breathes out, and deep in his belly, the harmonica plays.

A note comes through the freshly drilled hole.  
It is rolled in a long tube. COWBOY opens it.  
It reads "HHHHS". He says the word. Doesn't make sense. "HHHHS?"  
He is of course holding the note upside down.  
He rolls it up and pushes it back through.  
He sighs. In his belly, the harmonica plays.  
He puts his hands on his hips and the jaw harp twangs.

There is a flapping, crumpling noise from Next Door. He stops.

COWBOY picks up a piece of gum from the floor near the mouse hole and eats it. It tastes yucky. He uses it to stick his picture back on the wall.

He has become a musical instrument, and uses his swallowed instruments to 'twang' and 'hoot' a wee tune.

## SCENE 8B

Music: *The Wait* (Morricone/Attansio) **Ennio Morricone** 1965 BMG Ariola

COWBOY B stands back and looks at all the holes.

There is a hole where the drill came through the wall, a hole where his lasso hung (now plugged with paper) and of course the mouse hole.

Cautiously he stoops, trying to peer through them all from a distance.

Then he straightens up and pulls the white feather from his waistcoat pocket.

He holds it in his fingers and contemplates it sadly.

Then he moves to the window, parts the curtain, and brushes the sill.

A few more white feathers drift to the floor.

He looks at the feathers, the window, then at the wall Next Door.

Deep in his belly, his harmonica blows a note, and his jaw harp twangs.

He pushes a feather through each hole.

He waits.

The feathers come back.

An ominous 'click' comes from Next Door.

## SCENE 9B

Music: **Paralyzed** The Legendary Stardust Cowboy 1968 USA  
...and **Allegro from Eine Kleine Nachtmusik** by Mozart as sung by The Swingle Singers.

A peculiar voiceover is heard. COWBOY B leans on the wall, pushing the skillet aside to press his ear against the wall.

Violent music comes from Next Door.

He reels away, holding his ear.

It's the worst music he has ever heard.

COWBOY B goes to the radio and tunes it. Many different types of music fuzz in. He finds some a capella Mozart, and stands back, smiling.

The music is really irritating.

He turns the radio to the wall.

Then a gunshot rings out. He flinches, then recovers.

A hole has appeared in the wall.

He investigates it, not realising what has happened.

A wisp of smoke rises from it, and a shaft of light penetrates the room.

He notices something at his feet. He pulls it. It is brown and leathery.

It wriggles. He looks for a weapon, and beats it with the skillet as he yanks harder on it. A pair of tasselled chaps unfurls from the hole

The gunfire begins again. Five shots.

A capella Mozart blares. A bugle sounds. Drums smash.

Five ricochets ping off his skillet.

The bullet holes explode in a circle, on the wall, squirting puffs of dust.

He looks for furniture, anything to take cover behind.

He is scared.

But then he bravely takes a stand, and hits the wall with his skillet.

He stands still, with the skillet still against the wall

The music is gone. All is quiet.

## SCENE 10B

Music: *Doctor Gradus Ad Parnassum* From Children's Corner by Debussy performed by Bela Fleck from the album *Perpetual Motion*

The music cascades gently. COWBOY B removes the skillet to reveal a hole in the wall. He takes a step back, then with some trepidation, puts an exploratory finger in the lasso hole.

*[Above him, and unseen by him, a finger enters the pistol hole.]*

COWBOY B removes his finger...

*[...And the other finger disappears at the same instant.]*

Bolder now, he puts a hand in the drill hole.

*[A hand protrudes from the mouse hole simultaneously.]*

Taking it out, *[The other hand goes]* he then puts a hand in the mouse hole... *[another hand enters the drill hole]* ...and pulls it out.

He sees something out of the corner of his eye. *[It is the other hand disappearing.]*

He removes his hand and puts it back. This time he sees the other hand.

He is amazed. He withdraws his hand; replaces it, and wiggles his fingers.

*[The fingers of the other hand wiggle too.]*

He pulls out his hand, the other hand goes, and he wiggles his own fingers.

He leaves the wall, goes to centrestage, finds the white hanky his harmonica was wrapped in, and uses it to wipe his brow.

Looking at the hanky, he gets an idea. He turns and puts the hanky through the drill hole...and sure enough, a hand bearing the same hanky emerges from the hole the pistol shots and skillet blew in the wall.

COWBOY B withdraws his hand, the other goes too.

He tries again, jiggling the hanky. The other hand jiggles its hanky.

He replaces his hand, and reaches up to grab the hanky the other hand holds. He snatches it, and withdraws his own hand to find that it no longer holds the hanky.

He puts the hanky back in the hole and repeats the action quickly. In a white flurry, The hanky appears to be circulating, via the hands, through his room and into the other.

He withdraws his hand, and retreats downstage, mopping his brow again. He contemplates the hanky once again, and waves it in the air, like the white flag of surrender. He turns to the wall as if to rehearse the course of action, then strides to the drill hole.

The music nears its crescendo.

He takes a deep breath, then puts his hand in the hole and waves the white flag as hard as he can.

The other hand enters, also waving its handkerchief in surrender.  
The music rushes to a halt. The hand drops the hanky.

His arm still embedded in the wall, the COWBOY looks at the audience for the first time.

*Blackout.*

*[CONTINUED]*

## **INTERLUDE**

A clock face shines like a moon in the blackness.  
The last piece of music can be heard. Backwards.  
The clock hands move backwards.  
The sound increases in volume and pitch, as the soundtrack 'rewinds'.  
Samples of the soundtrack are barely recognizable as they rush past us  
backwards, at dizzying speed.

One side of the room moves, and the set 'turns a page' like a book, revealing  
another room, a mirror image of the last. The figure of a cowboy is dimly  
visible in the bed, which is now on the opposite side of the room.  
This is the other side of the wall. Next Door.

The clock hands come to a standstill.  
The soundtrack grinds to a halt.  
Silence.

## SCENE 1A

*Music: Short Trip Home [Meyer]*

*From the album An Appalachian Anthology Sony Classical SK89683*

A bare room. A while ago. Perhaps it is a motel. The music plays.

A bird sings. A plaster bust of a horse's bottom on the wall.

COWBOY A sleeps restlessly in bed. Only his hat is visible.

The bird keeps singing joyfully. It wakes COWBOY A.

He 'sits up' suddenly in bed, and glares at the window.

Leaping out of bed, he discovers he is still holding his teddy.

How embarrassing. He puts teddy back in to bed, pinning him down with a hospital tuck. He smooths the sheet until it is perfect.

Still the bird sings.

COWBOY A exercises, his movements a rigorous mix of martial arts and cowboy gestures. He practices lassoing, mounting and riding his horse, and a vicious 'quick draw' of a non-existent gun.

That dang bird still sings.

He sets his jaw, and swaggers stiffly through the room, surveying his tiny empire. He stops at the easel.

He turns and regards the framed picture of his trusty horse on the wall behind him. He picks up a crayon, and focuses intently on the picture he is about to draw of his horse.

The bird sings, and someone whistles. Next Door.

It breaks his concentration. He reaches for a coffee mug on the bedside shelf, picks it up and hurls it out the window.

There is a thud, and the birdsong stops.

A feather or two drifts into the room, unseen by COWBOY A.

Quiet at last.



## SCENE 2A

Music: *Hello Walls* (Nelson) *Willie Nelson* 1973 [Liberty Records]

The COWBOY turns on the radio. Its dial lights up and static is heard.

He grabs a coathanger, bends it (using far more strength than is necessary) and shoves it in the top of the radio. Music starts. It's country.

He wants a drink, but can't find his mug. He prowls the room accusingly, until he realises he threw it out the window. Darn.

He's hungry, and can smell food. There is cheese on the floor near the mouse hole. He eats it, but it's off. He grits his teeth and swallows it anyway.

Refreshed by his 'breakfast', he goes once again to his easel, and prepares to draw. Like a professional artist, he checks in with the horse portrait, squinting one eye at an upturned thumb. He starts to draw, and has scratched a few lines when a 'thudding' noise comes from Next Door. He tries to keep drawing, but can't.

COWBOY A goes to the wall and gives it a sharp bang. The noise stops.

Again he draws. Again the noise comes. He hits the wall harder this time. The noise stops.

He puts the finishing touches on his drawing, rips it off the easel and reveals it. It's a pathetic stick-horse. He rips up the drawing, and whacks the wall, lower this time, near the lasso.

He turns the radio off. Click.

Its dial dims as he listens for sounds from Next Door. None.

### SCENE 3A

Music : **Wayfaring Stranger** Cullen Gaylean And The Virginia Mountain Boys  
From Classic Bluegrass (Smithsonian Folkways)

Quiet. COWBOY A returns to his easel, and flattens the new, blank sheet of paper. Static comes from Next Door. He pauses, calms himself, and starts to draw.

The sound of someone singing can be heard. It's not his radio. COWBOY A is jolted into action, poised like a beast of prey. He puts his ear to the wall, searching for the source of the sound... and the music gets louder.

He returns to his drawing, trying to calm himself, and finishes it off. It is clear he's not in a creative state of mind. He stabs his crayon into the paper to make his final mark. He rips the drawing off the easel and reveals it.

He has drawn a pair of siamese horses, singing. He rips, then crumples up his drawing. He looks threateningly at the wall, and as if in response, Next Door's music stops and is replaced by static.

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## SCENE 4A

Music: **Little Birdie** The Stanley Brothers from the album *Classic Bluegrass* (Smithsonian Folkways) [edit]

The COWBOY starts again to draw.  
A drawling voice and applause come from Next Door.  
How many people are back there?  
He resumes drawing, but a laugh from Next Door halts him.

He puts the crayon down, turns and strides ominously to the wall.  
Music starts. Frantic music. He leans to the wall. It gets louder.

It's infectious. It makes his legs want to dance. He crushes the impulse, and stands perfectly still, withstanding the joyous torrent of sound emanating from Next Door. He stiffens his resolve and runs to the easel.

He continues his drawing, rather more violently this time.  
He puts the crayon down and sticks his fingers in his ears. It stops the music, but rather impedes his drawing. He removes one finger to pick up the crayon, but the noise invades him.

He screws up two pieces of paper from the floor and shoves them in his ears.  
Good. But then a 'sproinging' sound comes from Next Door.

Infuriated, he draws, strenuously ignoring the music. He detaches the drawing to reveal a picture of a horse with springs for legs.

Then stomping noises start. 'Twang'. 'Sproing'. 'Stomp'.  
The tension builds. Someone is dancing Next Door. It must stop.

He takes a breath, then bangs firmly on the wall.  
The music continues.  
He's winding up to bang again when, to his surprise, the song stops.  
He returns to CS, triumphantly.  
Static. Then a quiet 'twang.' Then another.

## SCENE 5A

*Music: Bach Prelude From Cello Solo from the Bela Fleck album Perpetual Motion [edit]*

Static comes from Next Door. There is also static in COWBOY A's brain.

He walks along the wall, back to his bed, and playfully punches his teddy. The punches increase in intensity until he is bashing the poor little thing. With some effort he controls himself, and strokes teddy's furry head tenderly.

Then a quiet banjo tune emanates from Next Door. The ghost of a sound at first, COWBOY narrows his eyes, puts an ear against the wall, and sure enough, it gets louder. He squeezes teddy's head.

He doesn't know what to do. He traces the sound to the mouse hole, and tries to block it, first with his foot, then with his hand, then with his whole body, lying in front of the hole.

It takes a moment for COWBOY A to realise that this method impinges slightly on his personal freedom, before he comes up with a blindingly good idea, and stuffs the hole with his neckerchief.

He combat-rolls away from the hole, and saunters to his easel.

Then, out of his sight, the neckerchief disappears, pulled from the other side. With the hole unplugged, the music gets louder.

He turns to the hole. He stiffens with anger.

Suddenly the neckerchief reappears. Like a desperate commando, he stalks the neckerchief, grabs it, retreats and puts it on.

There is something that feels suspiciously like snot on his neckerchief. A click comes from Next Door and the music stops. He is fuming.

## SCENE 6A

**Music:** *Carmina Burana Fantasy* Sandy Bull (Based On Carl Orff's Work, Arrangement By Sandy Bull) Associated Music Publishers Inc. [BMI] (P) & © 1999 Vanguard Records

COWBOY A bangs on the wall. Much harder this time. There is a 'stomp' from the other side. Then quiet. He bangs again. A muffled 'clatter'.

He switches his radio on. Static. Then a tense, solo banjo plunks and strums. He heads off to his picture.

Out of his sight, his radio starts to creep along the bench where it sits. He turns to find it has moved. He replaces it. He returns to his painting.

The radio moves again. He turns as it stops. Then the penny drops and he observes suspiciously.

He traces the movement to the power lead that seems to run into a tiny hole Next Door. He firmly replaces the radio and heroically grabs his lasso from its hook on the wall. The hook falls off, revealing a small hole.

He skillfully manipulates the rope, revealing a touch of the showman, and he 'captures' and 'ties' the radio to its shelf, then stands aside and presents his conquest like he's a rodeo champ.

Unseen by him, a coathanger appears through the lasso hole. COWBOY A releases the radio, and primly rolls up his lasso. He hangs it on the coat hanger. The coat hanger is pulled out, and his rope falls to the floor.

This happens a few times. He doesn't get it, and leans on the wall.

A white feather comes through the wall and tickles him. He giggles, then turns to discover the feather. He is angry that he was made to laugh. He yanks it out of the hole, glares at it, and shoves it back.

In the absence of a hook, he puts the knotted end of the lasso in the hole, which blocks it effectively, and allows it to hang there quite nicely.

The rope moves, and gradually disappears, being drawn through the hole into Next Door.

He races for it, but the end slithers out of his grasp. Cautiously he looks through the hole... and is poked in the eye with the end of his own rope. He pulls it back into the room. He is really angry now, and shoves a wad of paper into the hole, as much to punish it as repair it.

## SCENE 7A

Music: *A Gringo Like Me* (Tevis/Morricone)

A macho tune starts. Muffled harmonica comes from Next Door.

He gets some chewing gum, and eats several pieces of it.

COWBOY A goes to his easel and writes a note.

He reads it. It says "SHHHH."

He rolls up the note, and goes to poke it through the lasso hole.

He can't. He's 'fixed' it with the wad of paper.

He finds a wicked looking hand drill under his bed, and determinedly drills a rather larger hole in another spot on the wall.

The harmonica plays again Next Door. It spurs him on.

He pulls the drill out of the hole, and the drill bit is gone.

He rolls the note up, then pushes it through.

He feels like he has won the feud. He waits, playing with the chewing gum in his fingers.

There is a rustling and a hissing noise from Next Door. Then a harmonica sighs. The rolled up note comes back. He unrolls it.

It is unchanged. "SHHHH". Infuriating. He goes to throw the note to the floor, but can't. The gum makes the paper stick to his fingers and he has trouble getting rid of it.

He finally manages to extricate himself from the gum by wiping it in the mouse hole.

The paper in his hand, he walks slowly DS, crumpling it into a tiny ball as the song gallops to a close.

The radio shorts out, its dial flickering. Silence.

A harmonica wheezes briefly, something twangs. Then twangs again. A bizarre wheezing, twanging song emanates from next door.

COWBOY A rips the paper... into... tiny... little... pieces.

## SCENE 8A

Music: *The Wait* (Morricone/Attansio) **Ennio Morricone** 1965 BMG Ariola

Like a commando, COWBOY A looks in all the holes. Drill hole. Combat roll. Mouse hole. Withdraw. He can't see anything. The mood is tense.

He unplugs the lasso hole, looking for his adversary.

He turns to face the wall. One by one, white feathers poke through the holes, then mockingly float to the ground.

He stands still, his imagination firing. He turns to his easel and draws a picture of a huge duck with a COWBOY hat on. Is that what's Next Door?

He creeps around, stalking, collecting the feathers, constantly aware of the holes.

He examines the feathers, then frantically pushes them back Next Door.

He pulls a box from under the bed. It is heavy. In it is a white bundle.  
He ceremoniously removes and unwraps it.  
In the white hanky is wrapped a shiny, black gun.

From Next Door, a harmonica sounds briefly, followed by the twang of a jaw harp.

COWBOY A takes the gun and cocks it.

Click.

## SCENE 9A

Music: **Paralyzed** The Legendary Stardust Cowboy 1968 USA  
...and **Allegro from Eine Kleine Nachtmusik** by Mozart as sung by The Swingle Singers.

COWBOY A checks in with his teddy.  
This is the big one, little buddy. We may not make it out alive.

The radio bursts into life. An announcement drawls. He turns the volume up. He grabs the radio and turns it around slowly, deliberately, so its speaker pumps sound into Next Door.

The music is bizarre. Cowboy punk played by monkeys. Perfect for battle. He takes his waistcoat off, slowly revelling in the violence of the music. He changes the station on the radio, turns the volume up full and turns the speaker to the wall.

COWBOY puts the gun down, and takes off his shirt. He holsters the gun. He warms up, flexing his muscles, wheels around, quickdraws at the wall and shoots.

The recoil smacks his hand and he spins around from the force of the explosion. He grasps his shaking hand in pain.  
A small hole has appeared in the wall.  
Smoke wafts from it, and a shaft of light comes into the room.

The music screams and rattles along.

He stands like a commando, close to the wall, gun raised. Listening. His chaps start to fall down. They are being pulled through the mouse hole. He struggles in an awkward dance, as a metallic clanging issues from Next Door. Now he stands in his long johns.

In a frenzy, he unleashes five more shots, pounding and posing around the room like an action hero. Until his gun clicks. No ammo.

Six holes in the wall in a little circle, wisping smoke.  
His hand is killing him. His brain is about to explode.

He can hear noises on the other side of the wall. More music.  
A capella Mozart! The sound is cacophonous. His rage is blinding.

He punches the wall near where he shot it and the music stops.

Silence.



## SCENE 10A

*Music: Doctor Gradus Ad Parnassum From Children's Corner by Debussy performed by Bela Fleck from the album Perpetual Motion*

The music trickles gently down. COWBOY A removes his hand to reveal a hole in the wall. He takes a step back, then with some trepidation, puts an exploratory finger in the pistol hole.

[Above him, and unseen by him, a finger enters the lasso hole]

COWBOY A removes his finger  
[And the other finger disappears at the same instant.]

Bolder now, he puts a hand in the mouse hole.  
[A hand protrudes from the drill hole simultaneously]

Removing his hand, [the other hand goes] he puts a hand in the drill hole...  
[Another hand enters the mouse hole] and pulls it out.  
He sees something out of the corner of his eye. [It is the other hand disappearing.]  
He removes his hand and then puts it back. This time he sees the other hand.

He is amazed. He withdraws his hand; replaces it. And wiggles his fingers.

The fingers of the other hand wiggle too.  
He pulls out his hand, the other hand goes, and he wiggles his own fingers.

He leaves the wall, goes to centre stage, finds the white hanky his gun was wrapped in., and uses it to wipe his brow.

Looking at the hanky, he gets an idea. He turns and puts the hanky through the pistol hole...and sure enough, a hand bearing the same hanky emerges from the drill hole.

COWBOY A withdraws his hand, the other goes too.

He tries again, jiggling the hanky. The other hand jiggles its hanky.

He replaces his hand, and reaches up to grab the hanky the other hand holds. He snatches it, and withdraws his own hand to find that it no longer holds the hanky.

He puts the hanky back in the hole and repeats the action quickly. In a white flurry, the hanky appears to be circulating, via the hands, through his room and into the other.

He withdraws his hand, and retreats DSC, mopping his brow again. He contemplates the hanky once again, and waves it in the air, like the white flag of surrender. He turns to the wall as if to rehearse the course of action, then strides to the pistol hole.

The music nears its crescendo.

He takes a deep breath, then puts his hand in the pistol hole and waves the white flag as hard as he can.

The other hand enters, also waving its handkerchief in surrender.  
The music rushes to a halt. The hand drops the hanky.

His arm still embedded in the wall, the COWBOY looks at the audience for the second time.

*Blackout.*